

**“NATIONAL CENTER FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE”
FOUNDATION**



**EXPERT PANEL REPORT
INSTITUTIONAL ACCREDITATION OF
SHIRAK REGIONAL STATE COLLEGE**

Yerevan – 2024

INTRODUCTION

The institutional accreditation of the Shirak Regional State College (hereinafter referred to as TLI or college) is carried out based on the application submitted by the College. The process of institutional accreditation is organized and coordinated by “National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance” Foundation (hereinafter ANQA), guided by regulation on “State Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Academic Programmes in RA” set by RA Government Decree N 978-Ն (dated June 30, 2011) and by Decree N 959-Ն on “Approval of RA Standards for Professional Education Accreditation” (dated June 30, 2011).

The expert examination was carried out by the independent expert panel, which is made up of four local experts and was formed in accordance with the requirements set by the National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance Foundation in regulation on “Formation of the Expert Panel.”

The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of the Republic of Armenia funded the accreditation process.

The institutional accreditation is aimed not only at external evaluation of quality assurance but also at continuous improvement of the quality of management and academic programmes at the institution. Special emphasis was paid to the institution's and employers' cooperation and its impact on education content.

The hereby report comprises the results of the evaluation of the TLI's institutional capacities by the State Accreditation Criteria and Standards.

SUMMARY OF EVALUATION

The expertise of the Shirak Regional State College institutional capacities was carried out by the independent expert panel formed by the requirements of “Regulation on the Formation of the Expert Panel”, «National Centre for Professional Education Quality Assurance» Foundation. The evaluation was conducted according to 10 institutional accreditation criteria set by the RA Government Decree N 959-Ն, dated June 30, 2011.

When conducting the evaluation, the expert panel considered that the college was undergoing institutional accreditation for the second time.

When conducting the evaluation, the expert panel considered that the college is a VET institution whose mission is to "contribute to the development of vocational education in the Shirak region, ensuring innovative educational quality at an international level, with an emphasis on improving service quality and establishing partnerships between the educational system, employers, and other social partner organizations. As a key part of its mission, the college aims to become a student-centred educational environment that prepares its graduates for active public life and leadership roles in line with the demands of the evolving labor market." The college has improved its strategic program based on the previous accreditation process, making it long-term (5 years) and developed a related action plan with a timeline, aligning it with the region's needs. However, the strategic plan is not linked to the department's short-term (annual operational) plans. The performance of the current or previous strategic plans has not been analyzed. The strategic management system is being implemented in the college for the first time. The college does not systematically study the internal and external factors influencing it and does not conduct risk identification. This is evidenced by the absence of documented research based on which the strategic program was developed.

Administrative decisions are based on collected data, but stable mechanisms for collecting and analyzing reliable data are still lacking. Decisions are mainly made based on observations and discussions with collaborating organizations, which may not always reflect the full picture. In general, administrative decisions have led to positive results and, although at a slow pace, they contribute to the implementation of the college's mission and the strategic plan's objectives. However, the full implementation of the strategic plan under the current conditions of the absence of institutional mechanisms is unrealistic.

Due to the established partnerships with employers, administrative decisions have somewhat contributed to improving academic programs and enhancing the credibility of awarded qualifications.

The college's management system emphasizes the role of quality assurance and its development. The quality assurance system conducts needs assessments and problem identification, but its general analyses of these results have not yet focused on identifying major issues and do not provide appropriate solutions for decision-making.

Overall, the college's academic programs are aligned with its mission, the state's demands, and the labor market. This has been facilitated by collaborative links with regional employers and the involvement of the college's faculty in the development of state educational standards, which, because of their revision, have led to corresponding changes in the academic programs. The lecturers' teaching methodologies include a significant student-centred approach, supported by implementing mechanisms for identifying students' needs and conducting departmental classroom observations. However, the recognition of creative and research components in teaching has not yet been expressed.

Students' assignments and assessments are carried out in line with the professional context. Despite this, there is a disconnect between the existing assessment system and the expected learning outcomes, resulting in unclear evaluations of the expected outcomes, which need content-based revision.

The college has a relatively stable faculty for implementing its academic programs. The mechanisms used in the college for evaluating the faculty, primarily lecture notes, have had a positive impact on improving the educational process. However, there is a significant need for professional and language training. The college does not have lecturers from the practical field, which is due to the low salaries at the college.

The college has a sufficient material-technical and resource base for implementing academic programs, including the resources of organizations conducting practical training, which are used to develop practical abilities and skills. The college has implemented mechanisms to ensure transparency and accountability, which contribute to public awareness about the college and build trust in the graduates within the community. As a result, the college has formed a stable student body.

The college has mechanisms for identifying students' educational needs, which contributes to improving the learning environment. The college introduces students to career opportunities, has recently formed an alumni database, and tracks the trajectory of alumni activities. However, the results are not yet used to improve academic programs. At the same time, the career center's influence on students' career development and further employment is still not significant.

The college does not have mechanisms to promote the research activities of the teaching staff. Creating such mechanisms would contribute to the professional growth of the

lecturers, the involvement of students in joint research activities, and the strengthening of the connection between research and learning at the college. The assignments given to students include research and creative elements. College students conduct some research-related work and study other experiences in the professional field, but these activities are not based on an institutional framework.

Due to the presence of an employer council, the college has developed effective collaboration with regional employers, providing opportunities for students to participate in internships and, later, to secure employment. However, to achieve its strategic goal in the field of internationalization, the college needs to make efforts to find international partners, which will help attract additional resources, increase mobility for students and lecturers, and foster active and effective collaboration with local and international institutions carrying out similar academic programs, as well as the localization of best international practices.

The college fulfils its societal responsibility by passing on values and knowledge to broad sectors of the region's society.

Strengths of the Institution:

1. Active collaboration with employers.
2. Relatively stable faculty.
3. Involvement of representatives of the faculty in the process of reviewing the state educational standards.
4. The mission is understandable and acceptable for internal and external stakeholders.
5. The important role and significance of the college in the region.
6. Transparency in management and stakeholder involvement in decision-making.
7. Implementation of QA mechanisms.
8. Stable composition of students and operational mechanisms for students' professional orientation.
9. The role of transferring additional knowledge (values) to the community in the region.

Weaknesses of the Institution:

1. Lack of employers and practical lecturers.
2. Low salaries and lack of incentive mechanisms.
3. Absence of professional development programs organized by the college.
4. Need for modernizing resources.
5. Lack of experience in strategic management.
6. Lack of effectiveness in assessing QA mechanisms.
7. Weak expression of the research component in the APs and the absence of its requirement.

8. Weak collaboration with other educational institutions and international organizations.
9. Weak expression of the analytical component in the reports.

Recommendations:

Database management

1. Evaluate the current implementation of the SP and clarify its objectives and outcomes, making them measurable. Align the plans and reports of the college's departments with the SP.
2. Introduce the principle of PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) in the management system and decision-making processes.
3. Introduce sustainable data collection mechanisms, conduct monitoring to analyze the collected data and identify problems, and develop process improvement plans based on them.
4. Conduct effectiveness analysis of the operational QA mechanisms and make the results of QA analyses accessible to internal and external stakeholders, involving them in the college's QA processes.
5. Based on the results of the effectiveness analyses carried out, improve the QA mechanisms used in the college.

Credible award of qualifications

1. Develop a benchmarking policy and conduct comparative analyses of APs from similar programs of other VET institutions to identify potential improvements and the localization of best practices.
2. Introduce a clear policy and indicators for the improvement of APs.
3. Define and implement assessment procedures and criteria to ensure reliable learning outcome evaluation.
4. Identify faculty professional and language training opportunities based on assessed needs.
5. Involve employer-lecturers in the teaching process to help develop and enhance students' practical skills and abilities, fostering employer participation in the college's educational process.
6. Review and supplement the procedures and content of surveys conducted to identify teaching and learning needs.
7. Diversify the college's financial streams and create opportunities to enhance the material and technical base to produce specialists who meet the current labor market demands.

Long-term development

1. Develop policies and procedures for developing research at the college, defining research interests and directions that reflect the institution's unique features.
2. Implement programs aimed at research development and encourage the involvement of faculty and students in these initiatives.
3. Spread the positive experience of developing assignments with research components in dual programs to other academic programs in the college and implement mechanisms to ensure the connection between research and learning.
4. Take steps to increase the effectiveness of measures to facilitate the professional orientation of applicants and the transition of graduates to professional employment.
5. Prepare reports at the college analytically and present them according to the key indicators and outcomes of the SP evaluation, ensuring the existence of an evaluation mechanism for the implementation of the SP.
6. Activate cooperation links with other colleges and international organizations to exchange experience and implement best practices, including an employee responsible for internationalization from the college.

Gagik Ktryan, Chair of Expert Panel

04.09.2024

DESCRIPTION OF EXTERNAL REVIEW

COMPOSITION OF EXPERT PANEL

The following expert panel carried out an external evaluation of the institutional capacities of the Shirak Regional State College.

1. **Gagik Ktryan** - Candidate of Physical and Mathematical Sciences, Lecturer at the European University of Armenia, head of the expert panel,
2. **Olya Avetisyan**- lecturer at Yerevan State College of Light Industry, member of the expert panel.
3. **Marina Potikyan**- Candidate of Economics, Lecturer at Yerevan State College of Informatics and the State Academy of Crisis Management of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Armenia, member of the expert panel.
4. **Artak Khachatryan**- student of Ararat Regional State College, student member of the expert panel.

The composition of the expert panel was agreed upon with the Institution.

Meri Barseghyan, a specialist at the Institutional and Program Accreditation Division of ANQA, coordinated the expert panel's work.

All the members of the expert panel and the coordinator have signed independence and confidentiality agreements.

PROCESS OF THE EXTERNAL REVIEW

The College applied for state institutional accreditation by submitting to ANQA (01.02.2024), filling out the application form, and presenting copies of the license and respective appendices.

The ANQA Secretariat checked the data presented in the application form and the appendices in the application package.

After deciding to accept the application, ANQA and the College signed an agreement. The timetable of activities was prepared and approved.

Self-evaluation

Considering that the educational institution is going through institutional accreditation for the first time and is in the initial stage of the formation of the culture of quality assurance in

college, ANQA has conducted four-day online workshops in February. The workshops aimed to prepare colleges for the organizational stages of the accreditation process. During the workshops, the interpretations of the institutional accreditation criteria and standards, the electronic questionnaire to be filled in for applying for institutional accreditation, and the features of self-evaluation and SWOT analysis were presented. The educational institution carried out a SWOT analysis, which was discussed with the employees of the ANQA. During the implementation of the self-evaluation, current discussions were organized by the ANQA to clarify the issues.

The self-evaluation of the college's institutional capacity was presented on 26.04.2024. Representatives of the institution's administrative and educational staff, lecturers, and students were involved in the self-evaluation process.

Preparatory phase

After the submission of the self-evaluation report and the attached documents by the TLI, the ANQA coordinator observed the package to reveal its correspondence to the requirements of the ANQA. The self-evaluation and the attached documents were provided to the expert panel for the preliminary evaluation. The composition of the expert panel was agreed upon with the College and was confirmed by the order of the ANQA Director. Within the scheduled time, the expert panel summarized the preliminary evaluation results, and the Chair of the expert panel, together with the process coordinator, set the site visit schedule.

Preparatory visit

Before the site visit, a preparatory visit to the college was carried out on 10.06.2024. The ANQA coordinator, the head of the institutional program accreditation department and the head of the expert panel were present at the meeting. During the meeting, the schedule of the site visit was introduced and agreed upon with the college and discussed, and mutually agreed decisions were made regarding the technical, organizational, and information issues of the site visit, the behaviour, and ethical norms of the meeting participants.

Site visit

The expert panel site visit occurred from June 19-21, 2024. During the week preceding the site visit, the members of the expert panel and the coordinator visited the college, observed the infrastructure and resources of the college, conducted class observations, and observed exams. Then the experts and the coordinator had a closed meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to bring out the strengths and weaknesses of the college according to the standards, clarify the questions to be asked to the target groups, and discuss the procedure of the meetings and the next steps.

The site visit started and ended with meetings with the college director. All the meeting participants were randomly selected from a pre-provided list. All scheduled meetings were held. During the visit, the expert panel studied documents.

At the end of each working day, the expert panel held closed meetings to discuss the results of the interim expert assessment, and at the end of the visit, the main results were summarized.

The expert panel reached its conclusion on the criteria after discussing and analyzing all members' work, always applying the principle of consensus.

Expert panel report

The expert panel members and the ANQA coordinator prepared a preliminary version of the expert report. After the expert panel members approved it, the preliminary report was provided to the college.

The college did not submit any comments on the preliminary report. Then, the expert panel prepared the report's final version, which was approved on 04.09.2024.

Liana Alaverdyan

Coordinator of the Expert Panel /04.09.2024

EVALUATION ACCORDING TO ACCREDITATION CRITERIA

CRITERION	CONCLUSION
<i>I. Mission and Purposes</i>	Satisfactory
<i>II. Governance and Administration</i>	Unsatisfactory
<i>III. Academic Programmes</i>	Satisfactory
<i>IV. Students</i>	Satisfactory
<i>V. Faculty and Staff</i>	Satisfactory
<i>VI. Research and Development</i>	Unsatisfactory
<i>VII. Infrastructure and Resources</i>	Satisfactory
<i>VIII. Societal Responsibility</i>	Satisfactory
<i>IX. External Relations and Internationalization</i>	Satisfactory
<i>X. Internal Quality Assurance System</i>	Satisfactory